As regards gas imports from Turkmenistan, an Indian delegation recently participated in the Ninth Steering Committee meeting of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline project held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 14-15 February, 2006, as an observer. The Steering Committee has invited India to become an official member of the project. India has now to take a view on joining the project.

Rangarajan Committee Report

†254. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received the report of Rangarajan Committee;

(b) if so, when this report was received; and

(c) the recommendations made in this report regarding the tax rates on petroleum products and for determining the prices of petroleum products?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. the Rangarajan Committee report on pricing and taxation of petroleum products was submitted to the Government on 17.2.2006.

(c) The main recommendations of the Committee are as follows:—

1. On pricing of petrol and diesel:

(i) Shift to a trade parity pricing formula for determining refinery gate as well as retail prices;

(ii) Government to keep at arms length from price determination and to allow flexibility to oil companies to fix the retail price under the proposed formula; and (iii) Reduce effective protection by lowering the customs duty on petrol and diesel to 7.5%.

2. On pricing of domestic LPG and PDS kerosene:

(i) Restrict subsidized kerosene to BPL families only; (ii) Raise the price of domestic LPG by Rs. 75/cylinder; (iii) Discontinue the practice of asking upstream companies to provide upstream

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

assistance, but instead collect their contribution by raising the OIDB cess from the present level of Rs. 1,800/MT to Rs. 4,800/ MT; and (iv) Government meeting the balance cost of subsidy from the budget.

3. On restructuring excise duties:

Shift from the present mix of specific and *ad valorem* to a pure specific levy and calibrating the levies at Rs. 5.00/litre of diesel and Rs. 14.75/litre of petrol.

The Committee has recommended that each of the first two sets of recommendations should be implemented as integrated packages.

Overhauling of pricing mechanism

255. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are contemplating for a complete overhaul of the pricing mechanism for petrol, diesel, LPG and kerosene;

(b) whether Government are moving in this direction due to increase in the current crude oil prices in the international market; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) In order to formulate a long-term pricing policy, the Government had constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. C. Rangarajan, Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister to examine different aspects of pricing and taxation of petroleum products with a view to stabilizing/rationalizing their prices, keeping in view the financial position of the oil companies, the investment needed in the sector, the need to conserve petroleum products, and establishing a transparent mechanism for the autonomous adjustment of prices by the oil companies. The Committee submitted its report on 17.2.2006. The recommendations